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## (S) NATIONAL RECONNAISSANCE OFFICE

WASHINGTON, D.C.

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

June 16, 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. VANCE

SUBJECT: OXCART PROGRAM

The CIA has proposed two options for modifying the OXCART phase-out plan in view of the BLACK SHIELD deployment to Kadena. An additional factor is the delay in achievement of an operational ECM capability in the SR-71. According to the original OXCART phase-out plan three of nine total aircraft (a/c #134, the former TAGBOARD launch aircraft is already in storage at [redacted] were to be phased-out of the operational program on July 1, 1967. Simultaneously, as specified in your May 9 memorandum, the SR-71 unit was to have been assigned responsibility for Cuban contingency operations previously covered by the CIA SKYLARK operation. At present, the schedule for an operational ECM capability in the SR-71 is estimated for October 1967. The SR-71 without ECM would not offer a sufficient increase in probability of survival over a U-2 with ECM against the Cuban defense environment to justify the substitution of the SR-71 for the U-2.

The first CIA option would be to defer phase-out of the three operational aircraft on July 1, 1967, one of which is currently assigned to flight test, until December 31, 1967. Also, the two additional aircraft (one a test airplane and a trainer) which in the original plan were to have been phased-out by October 1, 1967 would be kept until December 31, 1967. The cost of the OXCART program for FY 1968 under the original phase-out plan with minor modifications would have been [redacted]. The cost of this option, including the costs of the three aircraft deployment to Kadena, would be [redacted] added to the [redacted]. This option would provide attrition aircraft against possible losses (either combat or noncombat) in Southeast Asia and would provide a capability against a Cuban contingency.

NRO Review Completed

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The second CIA option would continue the entire OXCART budget throughout Fiscal Year 1968, and actually on a basis for procurement of lead-time support, spares, etc. which would protect the option for continuation of the program indefinitely. However, aircraft and engine improvement programs would be limited to safety of flight items only and no new equipment (such as ECM) acquisition would be undertaken during Fiscal Year 1968. The cost of this option would be

[redacted] of option one for a total [redacted] in addition to this direct cost under the OXCART budget line, we estimate a further cost of about [redacted] for fuel and photographic materials and processing for this option. Also, in the expectation of program continuation beyond Fiscal Year 1968, further development of equipment (especially ECM) would normally be contemplated.

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At the present time we are maintaining a position which would enable us to pursue option one. (Deferral of phase-out of all OXCART aircraft until December 31, 1961). However, a decision must be made very soon if we are to proceed with the best approximation to the original phase-out plan consistent with the Kadena deployment. The status of aircraft after July 1, 1967 under the present versions of the three plans would be as follows:

<u>Current Inventory</u>	<u>Phase-out Plan</u>	<u>Option One</u>
3 operational a/c at Kadena	Retain to 12/31/67	Retain to 12/31/67
3 operational at [redacted]	Phase-out two 7/1/67	Retain to 12/31/67
	Retain one to 12/31/67	
2 test a/c	Phase-out one 7/1/67	Convert one test to operational
	Phase-out one 10/1/67	Retain to 12/31/67
1 trainer (J-75 engines)	Phase-out 10/1/67	Retain to 12/31/67

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Under option two all aircraft would be retained indefinitely.

It can be seen that under the phase-out plan, after July 1, 1967, the three aircraft at Kadena would be backed up with only one operationally configured aircraft and clearly this is insufficient to insure availability of three aircraft at Kadena over a six month period. The Cuban contingency will be essentially

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not covered by either OXCART or SR-71 aircraft for most of this period. It therefore would seem to be prudent to adopt option one with a decision point in October to begin earlier phase-out of some OXCART aircraft when the SR-71 operational capability is verified. This would not greatly reduce the cost increment directly associated with option one [redacted] but will allow a longer period for orderly phase-out actions.

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